

Office of Animal Welfare Shares Dog Bite Prevention Tips

DOVER – In recognition of Dog Bite Prevention Week from April 9 to 15, 2017 the Division of Public Health Office of Animal Welfare (OAW) aims to reduce dog bite occurrences with useful tips for anyone who comes in contact with dogs. Dog bites are often preventable with responsible dog ownership and correct behavior around dogs.

In 2016, 1,564 dog bites to humans were reported to the Delaware Division of Public Health. Owners may be liable if their dog bites a person or another animal, but having control of one's dog can greatly decrease bite risks.

"It is extremely important for owners to develop a strong and respectful relationship with your dog so you can control it when it interacts with people and other animals," said OAW Delaware Animal Services Supervisor Chief Mark Tobin. "Having control of your dog will help you have a better relationship with not only your dog, but also other people and other animals."

If a dog is involved in a bite and does not have a current rabies vaccination, it will face 10-day quarantine at an animal shelter at the owner's expense. If it is vaccinated, it will face a 10-day quarantine at home. A dog owner may also face fines for failure to vaccinate, and possibly dangerous dog charges depending on the circumstances.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 4.5 million dog bites occur every year in the United States and more than half of those bites occur at home with familiar dogs. Many of these bites involve children. The National Canine Research Council found that no one breed of

dog is more likely to bite a human or other animal than another.

The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) and American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) provide the following tips to help prevent dog bites:

- Never pet a dog without asking permission from its owner.
- Leave a dog alone while it is eating or sleeping.
- Know common dog bite triggers, such as when a dog is in pain, injured or ill. Also be cautious when a dog is exposed to loud noises, crowds, and people in uniforms, costumes or hats.
- Seek help from a veterinarian and/or dog behavior specialist the first time a dog shows any aggressive behavior.

Tips for families with children:

- Never leave a child younger than 10 years old alone with a dog, even if that child is familiar with the dog.
- Teach children not to run, yell, hit or make sudden movements toward any dog.
- Instruct children that a dog's bed, crate and food bowl are off-limits places where the dog should be left alone, and never to bother a dog that is eating or in its bed or crate.
- Inform children to quietly walk away if approached by an unfamiliar dog. If the dog continues to advance, stand completely still like a tree.

In addition to practicing responsible behavior around dogs, the AVMA recommends socialization for all dogs. Some socialization tips include:

- Expose dogs to regular positive and diverse experiences to acclimate them to a variety of situations.
- Provide praise, play and treats to reward dogs for

positive social interactions with people and other animals.

Develop a plan with a veterinarian and/or dog behaviorist for dogs that have special behavioral needs.

A person who is deaf, hard-of-hearing, deaf-blind or speech-disabled can call the DPH phone number above by using TTY services. Dial 7-1-1 or 800-232-5460 to type your conversation to a relay operator, who reads your conversation to a hearing person at DPH. The relay operator types the hearing person's spoken words back to the TTY user. To learn more about TTY availability in Delaware, visit <http://delawarerelay.com>.

Delaware Health and Social Services is committed to improving the quality of the lives of Delaware's citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations. DPH, a division of DHSS, urges Delawareans to make healthier choices with the 5-2-1 Almost None campaign: eat 5 or more fruits and vegetables each day, have no more than 2 hours of recreational screen time each day (includes TV, computer, gaming), get 1 or more hours of physical activity each day, and drink almost no sugary beverages.